

I will create a stronger, fairer Britain vows May

KEY POINTS FROM HER MANIFESTO

- Cutting net migration to tens of thousands a year.
- Increasing NHS spending by £8billion over the next five years.
- Wiping out the deficit by 2025.
- Increasing the national living wage to 60 per cent of median earnings by 2020.
- Continue to increase personal income tax allowance to £12,500 and higher rate threshold to £50,000 by 2020.
- No referendum on Scottish independence to take place until after Brexit completed.
- Scrapping winter fuel payments worth up to £300 a year to better-off pensioners.
- The so-called “triple lock” on pensions to become a “double lock” with the state pension to rise by the higher of average earnings or inflation.
- An extra £4billion for schools in England over five years.
- An end to the current provision of free school lunches for all infant pupils in England.
- Scrapping the ban on setting up new grammar schools.
- A free vote in the Commons to be held on repealing the ban on fox hunting.

By **Macer Hall**
Political Editor

THERESA May yesterday set out her plans for a “stronger, fairer and more prosperous Britain” while warning of tough choices ahead to take the country “through Brexit and beyond”.

Unveiling the Tory manifesto the Prime Minister put pledges to build a strong economy and deliver a clean break from the EU at the centre of her programme for the next five years.

“I believe our United Kingdom can emerge from this period of national change stronger, fairer and more prosperous than ever before,” she said.

She sought to steal votes from Labour and across the political spectrum with the offer of “a mainstream government that would deliver for mainstream Britain”.

She said: “We must take this opportunity to build a great meritocracy in Britain”

But she also risked alienating some on the Right of her party with a forthright rejection of “untramelled free markets” and “selfish individualism”.

Key pledges in the 84-page manifesto for the June 8 General Election include an extra £8billion for the NHS over the next five years, border control measures to bring annual net migration back down to the “tens of thousands”, an end to the ban on new grammar schools, a cap on energy bill rises and a new social care system.

The document also refused to shy away from warnings of some diffi-



Tory big hitters including Boris Johnson, Philip Hammond and Liam Fox listen to the manifesto launch yesterday

cult choices, dropping a previous commitment not to raise income tax or National Insurance.

It vowed that a returned Tory government will seek to keep taxes “as low as possible”.

Winter fuel payments for all but the least well-off pensioners were scrapped to raise more money for social care.

A guarantee of annual state pension rises of at least 2.5 per cent was also abandoned.

Mrs May sought to pitch her manifesto as a realistic “vision to build a better Britain” in contrast to the uncontrolled tax, spend and borrow socialist blueprint of Labour under Jeremy Corbyn.

In a sign of her determination to win parliamentary seats deep in Labour territory, the manifesto launch was held in a former factory mill in Halifax, West Yorks.

Speaking to an invited audience of Tory MPs and activists, the PM insisted she was not an ideological leader in the mould of her predecessor Margaret Thatcher. Asked if she was a “Thatcherite”, Mrs May said:

Picture: DAN KITWOOD / GETTY

DAILY EXPRESS VOTE

Q Do you trust May to create a stronger and fairer Britain?

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ease the pressure on a future chancellor to cut spending or raise taxes but will increase borrowing costs.

The manifesto also maintained the party's controversial commitment to stick to the international target of spending 0.7 per cent of the country's national income on overseas aid every year.

Other paragraphs in the document scrapped a string of Tory commitments introduced under David Cameron's leadership.

The long-standing “triple lock” guarantee of 2.5 per cent rises in the state pension was abandoned in favour of a watered-down “double Lock” promise of rises in line with earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

Modest

Text in the document spoke of the need to “restore the contract between the generations” following criticism that the Tories have offered generous hand-outs to pensioners in recent years while curbing benefits for younger voters.

A new plan for social care will guarantee pensioners do not have to sell their homes to pay for care during their lifetime.

Many commitments were aimed at wooing Labour voters, including “a new deal for ordinary working people giving them a decent living wage and new rights and protections in the workplace”.

On immigration, the manifesto said current levels were “too fast and too high” making it “difficult to build a cohesive society”.

The director of the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies, Paul Johnson, said the Tory manifesto offered a sharply different approach to tax and spending to Labour's programme.

In the Conservative manifesto, he said, “a pretty modest set of proposals” looked unlikely to need much in the way of tax increases while the Labour Party “have promised £50billion of tax rises”.



Theresa May accepts the applause of Tories in Halifax yesterday after revealing the party manifesto for a 'prosperous' Britain

DONATIONS POUR IN FOR TORIES

THE Tories received more cash donations in the first week of the election campaign than all the other parties put together.

Figures from the Electoral Commission show the Conservatives were given £4.1million between May 3-9, while rivals got £2,946,844.

The figures confirm Labour is in the pockets of the union barons, attracting little money from private donors.

Of £2.7million given to

Jeremy Corbyn's party, £2,360,000 came from hardliner Len McCluskey's Unite union.

Another £175,000 came from the Communication Workers Union, who pushed for Royal Mail renationalisation to be in the Labour manifesto.

The GMB gave £62,000 to Labour while the RMT donated £25,000.

The floundering Lib Dems got just £180,000 in donations, Ukup £48,000 and the Greens £15,000.

MOVE TO REPEAL NEWSPAPER LAW

NEWSPAPERS will not have to pay “crippling legal costs” of both sides if they win court cases under plans announced yesterday by the Tories.

The party vowed to repeal section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act if they win the General Election on June 8.

The law would have forced newspapers to pay their opponents' legal costs for libel and privacy cases – even if the news organisation won the case. The Society of

Editors said it “wholeheartedly” welcomed the commitment, adding many papers thought the law would have a “seriously chilling effect” on their work.

The second part of the Leveson Inquiry into press ethics will also be scrapped, it was announced.

The inquiry's conclusion was to investigate alleged law-breaking and improper conduct.

PM blasts critics of her social care plan

THE Prime Minister yesterday hit back at critics of her social care revolution, saying the reforms were essential to ensure fairness across the generations.

Under proposals in the Conservative manifesto, the value of assets people will be able to hold before being asked to pay their care bills will rise to £100,000 from £23,250.

The “triple lock” on pensions will be replaced with a “double lock” – ensuring they still rise in line with prices or wages, whichever is higher.

And wealthy pensioners will no longer get the winter fuel allowance, with the money saved going towards social care.

The Prime Minister said the scheme marked the first time a government had produced a proper long-term plan for the sustainability of social care in England.

Under the blueprint a planned £72,000 cap on care costs, which had been due to come in in 2020, will be scrapped.

But no pensioner will be forced to sell their property to pay for care until after their death.

Mrs May said that, as people would not have to pay while they were alive, it would remove the worry that people would have to sell their homes or see their savings dwindle away.

Ben Harris-Quinney, chairman of Tory think-tank The Bow Group, said, however: “It's a tax on death and on inheritance.”

Picture: DANNY LAWSON, JONATHAN BRADY / PA

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Corbyn visits a Sikh temple in London yesterday

Conservatives ‘set for 100 majority’

By **David Maddox**

leader Nick Clegg's Sheffield seat, putting them on a post-war low of 188. Tim Farron's Lib Dems would almost be wiped out, dropping from nine seats to just four.

According to the poll, 59 per cent believe Mrs May would be the best Prime Minister with just 31 per cent saying Mr Corbyn should be in 10 Downing Street.

Julie Marson, who is targeting the previously safe Labour seat of Dagenham and Rainham, said: “A lot of people are saying ‘I'm a lifelong Labour voter but this time I'm voting for Theresa.’ They don't want Jeremy Corbyn.” The research also revealed that two in

five voters who said they would vote Labour are considering switching to the Tories.

However, senior Tories have warned that the surge for Labour shows voters should not take a Conservative victory for granted.

A senior source said: “We need everybody to come out to vote and not assume the result is in the bag, otherwise we could end up with Prime Minister Corbyn and a coalition of chaos.”

Gideon Skinner, head of political research at Ipsos MORI, said: “Labour shouldn't get too carried away by the rise in the polls. The focus on their manifesto may have helped them this week but on many fundamentals such as

leadership the public still puts them a long way behind the Conservatives.

“Their vote is much softer with one in six supporters considering voting for Theresa May.”

● Former Labour Welsh First Minister Rhodri Morgan died while cycling in lanes near Cardiff on Wednesday, police said.

Yesterday tributes were paid to the 77-year-old, with flags flying half-mast at the Welsh Assembly.

Jeremy Corbyn hailed him as a “giant” of the Labour movement while Conservative Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns dubbed Mr Morgan “a great servant to Wales”.